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DCR AIMS TO ENHANCE BIKE/PEDESTRIAN SAFETY AND ACCESS

Commissioner launches statewide working group

The Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) is expanding its vision for the bike and pedestrian community by investigating alternatives for enhancing bicycle and pedestrian safety and access in the Charles River Basin and statewide.

DCR has launched a new Bicycle and Pedestrian Working Group, which includes representatives from 16 organizations and state and municipal groups, to help guide the agency's efforts to expand opportunities for cyclists and walkers across the Commonwealth.

"The establishment of a Bicycle and Pedestrian Working Group reinforces our commitment to increasing the opportunities for cycling and walking throughout the Commonwealth," said DCR Commissioner Richard K. Sullivan Jr. "DCR oversees hundreds of miles of roadways, parkways, pathways, and trails that serve a wide range of bicycle and pedestrian needs and interests. The working group is intended to serve as a conduit for sharing opinions, ideas, and information on this important part of our mission."

The group will hold its first meeting this month and is expected to meet several times a year. Group members will be involved in a variety of areas, including planning bicycle and pedestrian projects, reviewing the design of specific projects, improving public awareness and safety, and developing programs that encourage cycling and walking.

The working group also may develop subcommittees to focus on particular topics, projects, or geographic areas. These subcommittees likely will include additional participants who are not members of the core working group.

To address bicycle and pedestrian needs in the Charles River Basin, DCR's consultant Toole Design Group of Maryland recently completed a study of the Boston University Bridge, Craigie Dam Bridge, and Craigie Drawbridge. Those three bridges are scheduled for major repairs or reconstruction within the next two years. The company, which specializes in retrofitting transportation systems to make walking and bicycling safer and more convenient, proposed a number of alternatives for those bridges to enhance the experience for cyclists and walkers.

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DCR also plans to hire a contractor this spring to study all bicycle and pedestrian issues in the Charles River Basin. Funding for this hiring will come from the \$3 billion Accelerated Bridge Program, which was signed into law by Governor Patrick in August 2008. Under the program, DCR received \$900 million to repair 29 bridges and do preservation work on 50 other bridges statewide.

“We appreciate how quickly DCR moved this fall to improve the public process around the Accelerated Bridge Program” said David Watson, executive director of MassBike. “Not only did DCR bring in a consultant specializing in bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, the agency listened to public comments, unveiled completely new bicycle-friendly designs for two key projects, and then sought additional public input. By more fully integrating bicycling and walking into its projects, DCR is recognizing that active transportation is an important part of a healthier and more sustainable Commonwealth.”

Wendy Landman of WalkBoston said, “WalkBoston is pleased to see and hear DCR joining the effort to make it easier to walk and bicycle in the Charles River Basin. Now that DCR has expanded its walking and biking vision to its major transportation infrastructure, we look forward to long-term, multi-modal thinking throughout the agency's vast network of parkways, bridges, and path systems.”

Members of DCR’s Bicycle and Pedestrian Working Group represent the following organizations:

Appalachian Mountain Club, Bay Circuit Alliance, Berkshire Bike Path Council, Boston Metropolitan Area Planning Council, City of Boston Bicycle Program, City of Cambridge Environmental and Transportation Planning, Livable Streets, Institute for Human-Centered Design, MassBike, MassCentral Rail Trail Coalition, Massachusetts Community Path Coalition, Department of Public Health Nutrition and Physical Activity Unit, Executive Office of Transportation Bicycle and Pedestrian Program, New England Mountain Bike Association, Wachusett Greenways, WalkBoston.

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The Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), an agency of the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, oversees 450,000 acres of parks and forests, beaches, bike trails, watersheds, and dams, in addition to 278 bridges and miles of roadways. Led by Commissioner Richard K. Sullivan Jr., the agency’s mission is to protect, promote, and enhance our common wealth of natural, cultural, and recreational resources. To learn more about DCR, our facilities, and our programs, please visit www.mass.gov/dcr. Contact us at mass.parks@state.ma.us.